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SUBJECT: BERMUDA: 2009 WORST YEAR FOR ARRESTS, FIREARMS AND GANGS

REF: A. A) 2009 HAMILTON 149;  
[1](#)B. B) 2009 HAMILTON 101

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (SBU) Confirming what residents already know, Police Commissioner Michael DeSilva revealed that 2009 was the worst year on record for crimes involving arrests generally and guns and gangs specifically. There was also a 40 percent jump in the number of arrests over 2008. However, post now sees a concerted effort by the Government of Bermuda (GOB) and community groups to take the steps necessary to get gang violence under control - and to see what can be done to prevent it. End summary.

#### "A Massive and Scary Increase" in Gun Activity

[1](#)2. (U) In a speech to Rotarians on January 12th, new Police Commissioner Michael DeSilva stated, "We have seen the worst in Bermuda's history when it comes to firearms incidents." He cited three confirmed reports and eight unconfirmed incidents of gunfire so far in 2010. In 2008 there was one firearms injury, compared to 13 injuries and four fatalities in [1](#)2009. DeSilva described it as "a massive and scary increase." The Commissioner also reported that there were 4,500 arrests in 2009, the highest on record, contrasted to 3,163 arrests in [1](#)2008.

#### Some Gangs Imitate U.S. Gangs

[1](#)3. (U) DeSilva also disclosed that there are at least 19 gangs, with approximately 350 members between the ages of 12 and 40 who are organized in neighborhood groups. He denied that there has been a proliferation of guns (which are illegal in Bermuda), "We actually believe the number of guns are (sic) far less than urban legend would have us believe." He said that the gangs involved in the recent shootings share similar characteristics and behaviours as gangs in the U.S., particularly the Bloods and Crips, making the Island's partnership with the FBI important in terms of providing Bermuda police officers with gang-specific skills and knowledge. In response to a request from the Bermuda Police Service, the Consulate worked with the Legal Attachi to bring FBI trainers to Bermuda to conduct a gang course for police and prosecutors on January 4-6.

#### [1](#)4. Police Plans Moving Forward

(U) Commissioner DeSilva outlined plans for tackling gun and gang crime, including selected, targeted enforcement (intelligence-led deployment of police resources, patrols in hot spots, community engagement, and full use of legislative search powers); building criminal conspiracy cases against gangs to dismantle organizations; improving the quality of investigations

and forensic evidence retrieval; denying criminals use of the roads; and encouraging the public to provide information. In addition, U.K. police officers will be seconded to Bermuda to help, and Bermuda is also looking to the U.S., including the FBI for further assistance and possibly also the New York Police Department to provide as-yet undisclosed assistance.

15. Comment: The GOB Determined to End the Violence

(SBU) The Bermuda Police Service (BPS) now has the unqualified support of the GOB to tackle the increasing violent crime. The GOB has publicly committed to work closely with the Governor, who has constitutional authority over internal security. In contrast, as recently as early December, the GOB was calling for the Governor to relinquish that power. In addition, the BPS is seeking and receiving much-needed support and technical advice from U.S. and U.K. experts, which will enhance local security efforts. As average Bermudians wonder "what this Island is coming to," community groups have emerged to rally people to the cause of non-violence. There is no quick fix; efforts to stem the violence will require implementation of Commissioner DeSilva's plans as outlined above, as well as programs to get Bermuda's disenchanted young, black males out of gangs and back into the mainstream and to prevent others from entering the gang culture.  
SHELTON